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INVESTIGATION OF PUBLIC HEALTH IN FRANCE.

MINISTER OF HEALTH DIRECTS THAT INVESTIGATIONS BE MADE IN LOCALITIES HAVING DEATH RATES ABOVE AVERAGE.

The French Minister of Health has directed the prefects of the various departments of France to arrange without delay for investigation by the sanitary assemblies, as prescribed by the Public Health Law, with a view to rendering healthier all those towns and communes where the death rate is beyond the average for 1920, namely, 17.2 per 1,000. (The average for Havre for that year was 22.5 per 1,000, but the city medical officer of health states that the birth rate in Havre is one of the largest in France, consequently the infant death rate increases the average death rate beyond that of other towns where the birth rate is smaller.) These investigations must show in each case the reasons for the excessive death rate, and state what steps are necessary to lessen it. The Minister insists on the necessity of the prefects having these investigations carried out on the spot. Local investigation, in addition to facilitating discovery of suitable means of remedying the sanitary dangers in a town or commune, will have the advantage also of putting the town councils into touch with the departmental council of health or the sanitary commission, and of preparing the inhabitants to accept willingly the hygienic measures, local or general, that may be considered necessary to improve public health in places where it is deficient.

LIABILITY FOR SALE OF UNWHOLESOME FOOD.

An action was brought in the Georgia courts to recover damages for injuries alleged to have been caused by the consumption of butter containing a deleterious substance. The plaintiff had purchased the butter in the original unbroken package from a retail dealer who had, in turn, purchased it from the defendant. The evidence submitted by the plaintiff showed that the defendant did not manufacture or pack the butter, but acted merely as distributor. Because of the insufficiency of the evidence the lower court granted a nonsuit.

However, the Court of Appeals of Georgia, Division No. 2, reversed the judgment,¹ holding that the distributor of an article is not entirely without responsibility in the matter. The court said: "We do think, however, that, since the evidence is undisputed that the article was actually handled by the defendant, it was incumbent on it to exculpate itself to the extent of showing that it had in good faith procured it from some reputable manufacturer, distributor, or dealer, as an article reasonably safe for the use intended, especially so since there is nothing on the package to indicate who, as manufacturer or packer, was ultimately responsible for the alleged tort."

¹Fleetwood v. Swift & Co., 108 S. E., 909.